IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) A method for setting a retrieval condition when retrieving similar multimedia object data from a multimedia object database on the basis of the retrieval condition set by a user, the method comprising:

displaying a retrieval condition setting area for setting a plurality of retrieval conditions as an independent area; and

setting a retrieval condition on the basis of one of multimedia object data which has been set in the retrieval condition setting area and multimedia object data which has been input to the retrieval condition setting area;

wherein the retrieval condition setting area is arranged in a matrix form in which each row and each column are respectively assigned to one independent retrieval condition.

2. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the multimedia object data which has been set in the retrieval condition setting area comprises one of: inquiry object data which has been set as a retrieval condition; and one of an image and item associated with inquiry object data.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

displaying an object data list display area for displaying images associated with respective data in the multimedia object database, wherein

by selecting at least one multimedia object data from the object data list display area, the selected multimedia object data is displayed in the retrieval condition setting area and a retrieval condition is set.

-2-

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3, wherein

in response to operation of a control button for setting object data into the retrieval condition setting area, disposed near one of an image and item associated with multimedia object data in the object data list display area, the multimedia object data is displayed in the retrieval condition setting area and a retrieval condition is set.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3, wherein

in response to direct specification of one of an image and item associated with multimedia object data in the object data list display area, the multimedia object data is displayed in the retrieval condition setting area and a retrieval condition is set.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3, wherein

in response to operation of a pointing device to specify one of an image and item associated with multimedia object data in the object data list display area and move it onto the retrieval condition setting area, the multimedia object data is displayed in the retrieval condition setting area and a retrieval condition is set.

7. (Original) The method according to claim 2, wherein

the inquiry object data is set in the retrieval condition setting area by one of:

inputting it via an external object data input unit connected to a retrieval apparatus to which the method according to claim 2 is applied;

selecting it from an external database; and

taking in an object data file owned by the user.

-3-

8. (Original) The method according to claim 2, wherein

the inquiry object data is set in the retrieval condition setting area by inputting

multimedia object specified by an Internet address specified by the user.

9. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein

the retrieval condition is set according to a plurality of feature values

calculated from a multimedia object,

the retrieval condition setting area has a plurality of feature setting areas, and

the feature setting areas are assigned feature kinds which are set according to

one of: the feature values; and a combination of the feature values.

10. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 9, wherein

the feature setting areas are arranged and displayed in an n by m matrix form in

the retrieval condition setting area.

11. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein

the retrieval condition setting area comprises a dissimilar feature setting area

for setting a dissimilarity condition independently for each of selected objects.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 11, wherein

for each of feature values, similar and dissimilar feature setting areas are

provided as an adjacent pair, and

a plurality of pairs are arranged in an n by m matrix form, [[(]]where n and m

are natural numbers[[)]] matrix form.

-4-

13. (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein

the retrieval condition is set according to a combination of feature values which have been set in respective feature setting areas provided in the retrieval condition setting area, and

a method of the combination is set by the user.

14. (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein

inquiry object data is set and disposed in an arbitrary position in the retrieval condition setting area, and

a weight of set feature values is set according to a position in which the inquiry object data is set and disposed.

15. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein

at the time of retrieval condition setting, attribute information owned by a multimedia object is set as a keyword in combination.

16. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein

a result of retrieval conducted by using the retrieval condition which has been set is displayed in a list form in a retrieval result list display area, on the basis of one of: an order of similarity; and an order of a result of rearrangement when the user has conducted a rearrangement operation on the retrieval result, and

a retrieval condition is set by one of: displaying as many high-ranking multimedia object data as a preset number in the retrieval condition setting area on the basis of an order of display; and selecting at least one multimedia object data from the retrieval

-5-

result list display area and displaying the at least one multimedia object data in the retrieval condition setting area.

17. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein

the retrieval condition setting area is displayed in a display screen of a display device which is independent in hardware from an apparatus for executing actual retrieval.

18. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for setting a retrieval condition when retrieving similar multimedia object data from various multimedia object databases on the basis of the retrieval condition set by a user, the apparatus comprising:

a display device having a display screen in which a retrieval condition setting area for setting a plurality of retrieval conditions is displayed as an independent area;

an input unit configured to one of set multimedia object data in the retrieval condition setting area displayed on the display screen of the display device and input multimedia object data to the retrieval condition setting area displayed on the display screen of the display device; and

a retrieval condition setting unit configured to set a retrieval condition on the basis of multimedia object data one of set in and input to the retrieval condition setting area by the input unit;

wherein the retrieval condition area is arranged in a matrix form in which each row and each column are respectively assigned to one independent retrieval condition.

19. (Previously Presented) An apparatus for setting a retrieval condition when retrieving similar multimedia object data from various multimedia object databases on the basis of the retrieval condition set by a user, the apparatus comprising:

-6-

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a display device having a display screen in which a retrieval condition setting area for setting a plurality of retrieval conditions is displayed as an independent area;

an input means for one of setting multimedia object data in the retrieval condition setting area displayed on the display screen of the display device and inputting multimedia object data to the retrieval condition setting area displayed on the display screen of the display device; and

a retrieval condition setting means for setting a retrieval condition on the basis of multimedia object data one of set in and input to the retrieval condition setting area by the input means;

wherein the retrieval condition setting area is arranged in a matrix form in which each row and each column are respectively assigned to one independent retrieval condition.

-7-

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